



DICTYRUS BRACHYOTIS, Gould.

DICRURUS BRACTEATUS, *Gould.*

Spangled Drongo.

Dicrurus Balicassius, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 211.

———— *bracteatus*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part x. p. 132.

HAVING carefully compared the bird here represented with the other species of the genus inhabiting Africa, the continent of India and the Indian islands, I find it to be quite distinct from the whole of them; I have therefore assigned to it a separate specific title, and selected that of *bracteatus* as expressive of its beautifully spangled appearance. Its range is very extensive, the bird being equally abundant in all parts of the northern and eastern portions of Australia; it was found by Captain Grey on the north-west coast, by Mr. Gilbert at Port Essington, and it has also been observed in the neighbourhood of Moreton Bay on the east coast. I did not encounter it myself during my rambles in Australia; we are therefore indebted to Mr. Gilbert's notes for all that is known of its history. "This species," says he, "is one of the commonest birds of the Cobourg Peninsula, where it is generally seen in pairs and may be met with in every variety of situation, but more frequently among the thickets and mangroves than elsewhere. It is at all times exceedingly active and is strictly insectivorous; its food consisting entirely of insects of various kinds, but particularly those belonging to the orders *Coleoptera* and *Neuroptera*. Its mode of flight and its voice are both exceedingly variable; its usual note is a loud, disagreeably harsh, cackling or creaking whistle, so totally different from that of any other bird, that having been once heard it is readily recognised.

"I found five nests on the 16th of November, all of which contained young birds, some of them nearly able to fly, and others apparently but just emerged from the egg. The whole of these nests were exactly alike and formed of the same material, the dry wiry climbing stalk of a common parasitic plant, without any kind of lining; they were exceedingly difficult to examine from their being placed on the weakest part of the extremities of the horizontal branches of a thickly-foliaged tree at an altitude of not less than thirty feet from the ground; they were of a very shallow form, about five inches and a half in diameter; the eggs would seem to be three or four in number, as three of the nests contained three, and the other two four young birds in each."

The head and the body both above and below are deep black, the feathers of the head with a crescent, and those of the body, particularly of the breast, with a spot of deep metallic green at the tip; wings and tail deep glossy green; under wing-coverts black tipped with white; irides brownish red; bill and feet blackish brown.

The Plate represents a specimen procured at Port Essington of the natural size, and I may remark that examples obtained in that locality are somewhat smaller than those killed on the north-western and eastern coasts.